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SUBJECT: MFA DISCUSSES AFGHANISTAN WITH DAS MOON

REF: A. STATE 29482
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 746

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: MFA Second Asia Director Aleksandr Maryasov and SCA DAS Moon covered a range of Afghan-related issues during a March 26 meeting held on the eve of U.S. participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Conference on Afghanistan. Maryasov said that FM Lavrov would be an active participant in The Hague conference on Afghanistan, which complemented the SCO initiative to assist Afghan stabilization. He asked that ISAF expand its fight against narcotics trafficking, and confirmed that the GOR was considering an Afghan Ministry of Interior request to provide AK-47s. The GOR is pleased with the effectiveness of the NATO transit agreement, but concerned that a lack of capacity on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border could delay future shipments. Russia is interested in improving the rail yards near the border, as well as rehabilitating Soviet-built infrastructure in Afghanistan, if international funding could be identified. The GOR is not opposed in principle to UNSCR 1267 delisting of Taliban, but cannot agree to do so based upon what it considers unconvincing evidence, and is concerned that a real successor to Karzai has not emerged. Russia is not planning a special initiative to consult with Iran on Afghanistan, and agrees with the U.S. that additional regional actors can play a positive role in stabilizing the country. End summary.

The Hague Conference

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Second Asia (South Asia) Department Director Aleksandr Maryasov told SCA DAS Moon on March 26 that the GOR appreciated what it considered a U.S. initiative to hold an international conference on Afghanistan at The Hague on March 31, and pledged that FM Lavrov would "participate actively." Conferences such as those at The Hague and the March 27 SCO conference in Moscow helped focus attention and resources toward Afghan stabilization (septel). Maryasov expressed appreciation for Moon's preview of the President's March 27 announcement of the results of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategic Review. Moon explained that further details would be provided by the Secretary at The Hague conference. (Note: We passed the MFA the ref A white paper on March 27.) Maryasov and Moon agreed that there currently existed a more favorable atmosphere for real cooperation on Afghanistan, with Moon adding that the new policy laid out in the Strategic Review held out the prospect of decisive results in three to five years.

Can ISAF Fight Narcotics?

¶3. (C) Maryasov reiterated Russian concern with narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan, stressing that to fight extremists and not narcotics would be a "half task." He said that the GOR understood that the Afghan army and police could not sufficiently address the narcotics problem and asked what more ISAF could do. Moon explained that legal issues complicated using military forces for law enforcement purposes, but ISAF had been directed to tackle narcotics trafficking where it was linked to the insurgency.

¶4. (C) Maryasov explained that Russia and Afghanistan signed an intergovernmental agreement to fight narcotics trafficking during FM Lavrov's March 16 Kabul visit, and both sides agreed to continue using the GOR's Domodedovo facility to provide counter-narcotics training to Afghan officials. Maryasov reiterated that Russia had agreed to reconsider its opposition to two OSCE projects to train Afghan and Central Asian border and counter-narcotics officials in Afghanistan, but would wait until after the August election to determine if the security situation would allow these projects to go forward. Moon encouraged the GOR to support the two programs, adding that Washington was ready to work with Moscow to address Russian concerns.

Russian Arms to Afghanistan

¶5. (C) Maryasov confirmed that Russia was considering a request passed to Lavrov by MinInt Atmar to provide the Afghan National Police with AK-47s and other equipment

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(reftel). The MFA was looking to the Russian MOD or MOI for possible financing for the weapons, but cutbacks in ministry budgets would make any donation of military equipment "a problem." Maryasov reiterated that the MOD preferred that arms be supplied to the Afghans on a commercial basis. When Moon stressed that most weapons and military supplies were donated to the Afghans, and that he knew of no initiative to begin purchasing weapons, Maryasov replied that the GOR might consider some donations but a "more considerable amount" could be supplied through sales. Moon encouraged the GOR to coordinate the supply of AK-47s or other weapons to the Afghans through CSTC-A in Kabul, which would ensure that the weapons were properly stored and used.

Transit Agreement

¶6. (C) Maryasov said that the GOR understood there were "practically no problems" in the flow of ISAF-bound supplies through Russia and Kazakhstan, but there were problems on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border where the rail facilities between Termez and Hairaton were insufficient for moving large numbers of containers. Russian railways officials were aware of the problem and ready to construct new facilities at Hairaton if funding was made available. Maryasov did not indicate whether Russia would be willing to provide any financing for such work as part of its contribution to Afghanistan.

Infrastructure Rehabilitation

¶7. (C) Maryasov argued that Russia could render technical assistance to the rehabilitation of Soviet-built infrastructure in Afghanistan "cheaper and better" than other countries. He identified the Salang Tunnel, a hydro-electric plant on the Salang River, and factories and a grain elevator in the Kabul region as possible projects for Russian involvement. Maryasov suggested that Russian construction companies be linked-up with USAID either in Moscow or Kabul, but gave no indication that Russia would provide any funding for these projects.

¶8. (C) DAS Moon told Maryasov that the U.S. appreciated recent statements by GOR officials in support of the reconciliation of moderate Taliban with the government in Kabul. He stressed that the U.S. saw the UNSCR 1267 process as a useful tool to promote this process so long as it remained flexible, and raised recent Russian opposition to delisting several individuals despite the supply of additional information on them by the British. Maryasov responded that Russia was not against delisting, but would only support delisting based upon "truthful and convincing" information, which, he maintained, was not the case with the British information.

¶9. (C) Maryasov characterized the Afghan presidential election as the "most important event" in the stabilization of the country, and reiterated Russian concern with the gap between Karzai's current term in office and that of the next President. He explained that the international community must help the Afghans find a compromise and not allow the extremists to use this as an opportunity to advance their goals, a message FM Lavrov gave to Karzai and the leaders of both houses of Parliament during his recent visit (reftel). Maryasov expressed the GOR concern that there did not appear any "strong figures" to take over the Presidency. Karzai had made many mistakes, and proven himself ineffective, but at least had experience and tried to listen to the opposition in Parliament.

Working with Iran in Afghanistan

¶10. (C) Maryasov said press reports that Russia would use the occasion of the SCO conference on Afghanistan to hold trilateral Russia-India-Iran consultations to address the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan were inaccurate. He explained that Russia consulted with India on counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan and elsewhere through their CT working group, and also consulted less formally with Iran on these saQ issues. The Iranians had

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urged the GOR to create a mechanism to combat terrorism in Afghanistan, but, Maryasov explained, the GOR responded that there currently existed such a mechanism, ISAF, and we should support its initiatives in Afghanistan.

¶11. (C) Maryasov and Moon agreed that other countries could play a positive role in regional efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, with Moon highlighting the joint Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran counter-narcotics operation in Baluchistan as a positive sign. Maryasov pointed to the Turkish initiative to help Afghanistan and Pakistan stabilize their border as another positive effort.

¶12. (U) DAS Moon has cleared this cable.
BEYRLE